



May 2, 2007

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The Honorable Bart Gordon  
Chairman  
Committee on Science and Technology  
U.S. House of Representatives  
2320 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Gordon:

Thank you for your leadership in the recent passage of the reauthorization for the National Science Foundation (NSF) by your committee. Unfortunately, NSF research is now being threatened by attempts to challenge the scientific merit review process. As you prepare to debate the NSF reauthorization bill (H.R. 1867) on the floor, I ask that you and your House colleagues oppose efforts to prohibit funding for NSF-supported research grants that have already been awarded after considerable evaluation by independent scientists across the nation.

For over 50 years, the NSF has had a unique role in supporting basic research across the spectrum of scientific disciplines. This support has led to remarkable advances in fields as disparate as nanotechnology and economic theory.

AAAS recognizes and supports the importance of a broad, balanced portfolio of R&D investments at NSF. The need for strong support across all scientific fields comes both from the increasing interdependence of physical, biological, behavioral, and social sciences, and from the importance of all these fields to innovation and to the improvement of the economy, health, security and quality of life of all Americans.

Prohibiting specific grants sets a dangerous precedent for scientific research that has progressed and advanced for decades through freedom of inquiry into a broad spectrum of subjects. While congressional oversight of federal programs is of course important, second-guessing peer review in this way could compromise the fabric of our public research enterprise, one thread at a time. We urge you to oppose such amendments.

Sincerely,

Alan I. Leshner

cc: Jim Wilson